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REPORT NO.

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COUNTRY Poland

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SUBJECT Health and Sanitation Data on
the City of Warsaw

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REFERENCES:

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

SOURCE

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General

1. In 1952 the estimated population of the city of Warsaw was 900,000. Warsaw covered an area of approximately 800 sq. km.
2. There was direct communication by rail with cities in Russia, Austria, and Czechoslovakia, and with German border cities. There were flights between Warsaw and the following cities: Stockholm, Moscow, Budapest, Prague, Vienna, Berlin, Paris, Amsterdam, and London. There was some transportation by water to inland Polish cities.

Water Supply

3. The city of Warsaw had a public water supply system which was state-owned. The water, taken from the Wisla River, was filtered and chlorinated. Filtering was done by the gravel system, and by a system one Source heard referred to as the "express" (pospieszny) system. [He did not know what this system was.] The public water system was adequate for the whole population.
4. Sources estimated that 80% of the population used the public supply system; 1. the daily consumption of water was unknown to them. They did not know how the water was checked for unsanitary qualities but it was safe to use without boiling or further treatment. Bottled mineral water was used only by those who preferred it. Wells were used as a supply of water when the public system was not used. The use of wells was most common in the newer suburbs.

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Waste Disposal

5. The city of Warsaw had a sewage system. Sources estimated that 80% of the population was served by the sewage system. ² In those areas not serviced by this system, concrete cisterns were believed to be used. Sources were not knowledgeable as to what was done with human excreta after it was put in the cisterns. They were positive, however, it was not used as fertilizer. The ultimate disposal of sewage was in the Wisla River.
6. The drainage system was adequate for carrying surface run-off. There were storm sewers; open ditches were most often found on the outskirts of the city. There were some places in and near the city where surface water collected and stood after heavy rain. This could be attributed to poor engineering.
7. A general garbage collection took place about once every two weeks. Metal cans were used and were picked up by trucks. Other refuse was also collected about twice a month. Sources believed that the garbage was used to fill in various areas of the city and that other refuse was disposed of in the same way. Dead animals were probably buried; dead persons were buried.

Pest Control

8. As far as Sources knew there was no organized method for the control of mosquitoes, flies, lice, and other insects. From time to time rat poisons were distributed, sometimes ineffectively. There were no liquid poisons or sprays for killing flies. Flypaper was available but it did not seem effective. There were no metal screens manufactured in Poland and those who had screens manufactured prior to World War II guarded them jealously because flies were so prevalent.
9. There were bedbugs in almost every household. This could probably be attributed to overcrowded conditions and to the fact that poison for their extermination was not manufactured. There was no government agency which concerned itself with this problem; no scientific recommendations were made for their elimination.

Food

10. Rye and wheat were used for bread. All kinds of vegetables were used in season. Fish, mostly cod, pork, beef, mutton, and chicken were available on the market. Sausage was also available but was in short supply; veal was hard to get. Linseed oil, margarine, and lard were the fats used. One Source had heard that government health departments exercised control over slaughtering, and the handling of meat and fish and that meat was given an official government stamp. Sources had no information on refrigeration.
11. Food stores were clean but restaurants were not. Before nationalization food inspection laws were enforced by periodic inspections on the part of state officers. After nationalization these laws were neglected.
12. About 50% of the cows' milk sold was distributed in bottles by a government agency. It was also sold in retail stores where the customer brought his own container and sometimes peddled by farmers. Milk for general consumption was almost butterfat free. One Source had heard that there was a shortage of milk because a great deal of it was used for the manufacture of artificial wool and for glue for laminated woods. It was also used in plastic products for military use.

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13. Sources did not know whether or not dairy cattle were tested for tuberculosis, and they doubted if the milk was pasteurized. It was customary to pasteurize milk prior to World War II but they thought that this was now too expensive. The milk was, however, examined in some way, and a government agency existed for the establishing and enforcing of such regulations.

Public Health Administration

14. There were government departments actively concerned with tuberculosis, venereal disease, sanitation, maternity cases, child health, and infectious diseases. All cases of infectious diseases had to be reported. Each year children were given tuberculosis shots; shots for "typhus of the stomach" were given to adults annually.

Diseases

15. Sources had no information on the annual birth rate,³ the annual death rate, or the infant mortality rate. Although they knew that some of the leading causes of death were heart disease, cancer, tuberculosis, and arteriosclerosis, they were unable to give the total number of deaths resulting from any one disease. Endemic diseases were unknown to Sources. However, they stated that if any disease could be considered endemic, in their opinion nervous diseases would head the list. Such diseases were prone to develop from the oppression and fears of life in Communist Poland.

Medical Care

16. There were about 15 hospitals in Warsaw with a total of about 8,000 beds.⁴ Sources did not know the number of charity beds. Hospitals were overcrowded and beds were often placed in corridors. All types of medical, surgical, dental, nursing, and obstetrical services were available to a limited degree. There was always a shortage of common drugs, and Sources heard that modern equipment was lacking. Persons with communicable diseases were placed in isolation wards.
17. Sources had never heard of non-government health organizations in the city.
18. Sources had no information on medical schools or on medical research and development.
1. Comment: Wiadomosci-Polskie, a Communist Polish weekly, dated 28 February 1954, published in Frankfurt/Main, stated that 93% of the buildings in Warsaw were supplied by the public water system.
2. Comment: Ibid.: 90% of the population of Warsaw was served by the city sewage system.
3. Comment: Ibid.: 25,786 children were born in Warsaw in 1953.
4. Comment: Ibid.: 7,000 hospital beds in Warsaw; 283 consulting clinics; 849 physicians; 377 schools from elementary to college level; 20 dormitories capable of accommodating 3,000 university students.

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